

Hymns: 11 How Great Thou Art 65 This Is My Father's World

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

Big idea: No Secrets from God

Our scripture text for today is: **Joshua 7:1-26**

Introduction

Jeffery Epstein. Does that name ring a bell? You know, he was that very rich guy who bought an island in paradise – Little Saint James, U.S. Virgin Islands – and set it up as an exclusive destination for rich men to prey on vulnerable girls. For transport to and from this evil place, Epstein provided a luxury jet named the *Lolita Express*. His accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell, is awaiting sentencing for her role and is still battling in the courts on other fronts. Jefferey never faced justice for his crimes but instead was suicided August 10, 2019 in a Federal prison in Manhattan. Just last month, a primary accomplice of Epstein, Jean-Luc Brunel, a modeling agent, was suicided in a French prison.

Who were the clients who participated in this child abuse? Apparently, Prince Andrew could be one. He made an out-of-court settlement with an alleged victim. Some media moguls and politicians could be others. Despite all of the secrecy, intrigue, and attempts to cover tracks, we may learn for sure as investigation of this case continues.

Today, were going to see how one man named Achan tried to hide his sin and cover his tracks from an all-seeing God. It's been three months since we left off our study of the book of Joshua, so let's first step back to get our bearings.

God picked Abram to be the father of God's chosen people. He gave him the name *Abraham* and promised he would have innumerable descendants. He promised him the Promised Land of Canaan, showed it to him, and gave him a token to seal the covenant with him called circumcision. Abraham had a miracle son named *Isaac*. Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. God renamed Jacob to *Israel*. Jacob's twelve sons became the foundation of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Famine drove Israel and his family to Egypt where the LORD provided for them the best land. They flourished there until the leadership changed in Egypt and the children of Israel were made slaves for 400 years. The LORD provided Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The LORD took them across the Red Sea on dry ground (a great miracle), decimated the Egyptian army, and sent them through the wilderness to Mount Sinai where he gave Moses the Ten Commandments and the Law.

The Israelites proceeded to return to the Promised Land (also called Canaan). Everything was going good for them. They spied it out and found that it was good but were afraid that they could not conquer it. The LORD judged them to wander in the wilderness forty years for their lack of faith. Then Moses led them to conquer territory on the east side of the Jordan River. After forty years, thing are looking up again for the Israelites. The LORD is with them, and here they go.

Moses died. His successor, Joshua, then led the Israelites across the Jordan River. We will quickly recap the first six chapters.

Chapter 1:

Joshua was commissioned along with the soldiers to go take the Promised Land. He was given a promise that's still good for us today repeated in the book of Hebrews that the LORD will never leave you nor forsake you. That's a precious promise. We need to remember this. God's always with us, and He loves us.

Chapter 2:

Joshua sends spies to spy out the land. This is kind of a military strategy thing. God didn't need any military strategy to conquer Jericho. But Joshua sends spies there anyhow. But the spies met up with Rahab the harlot, and that was the *real* reason, the important reason why the spies went. They made a deal that they would rescue her when they conquered Jericho. What's so important about that? She actually was in the line of Jesus Christ. She had to be saved.

Chapter 3:

The Israelites crossed the Jordan River at flood stage. This was two million people. They crossed it on dry land. That was a miracle.

Chapter 4:

Joshua came back and put a couple of memorials down so they could point to these markers and tell their children this was where God did this great miracle.

Chapter 5:

Four religious events marked this chapter. First, the israelites in the wilderness had not maintained the covenant practice that God gave Abraham of circumcision. They resumed their circumcision. Second, they participated in the Passover celebration. Third, after the Passover, the manna stopped. That's what God used to feed them while they were in the wilderness for forty years. They had food there now. They didn't need manna. The manna stopped. Jesus called Himself the true bread from heaven. Finally, Joshua met up with guess who: the captain of the LORD's army. Who was that? He was the preincarnate Christ. The symbol of Christ stopped and all of the sudden here's the Guy who will lead them: Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6:

The great walled city of Jericho was just west of where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. That's where the Israelites crossed over. Before taking the city, Joshua dedicated the spoils from their coming victory to the LORD. They were to burn the city and everything in it except the metals which were dedicated to the LORD. The Israelites marched around the city for seven days. God knocked down the walls. They didn't have to do anything except go in, rescue Rahab, and take the city. God is fighting their battles for them. Joshua's fame spread throughout the land of Canaan. That's where we'll pick up our story today.

Prelude: Achan sinned.

Joshua 7

Things are going really well for the Israelites. They conquered all that land east of the Jordan River, they crossed the Jordan River miraculously, and God gave them the victory over this city with huge

walls called Jericho. Everything was going great. But here's what God said:

[1] *But*

But ... something happened.

the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing:

It's referring to the dedicated thing. These were the spoils that Joshua had dedicated to the LORD.

for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.

He was behind them. He was blessing them. He was giving them victory. Now, guess what? Something's changed. They don't have the LORD behind them. What will happen? The Israelites still don't know. Achan, guy who sinned, he knows, but he doesn't know God will turn on them and punish them.

Israel routed by Ai

[2] *And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, ...*

Now where was Ai? It was about thirty miles west of Jericho. The Israelites were camped by the Jordan River at a place called Gilgal. Joshua sent spies to check out Ai – just like when they spied out Jericho now they're spying out Ai.

[3] *And they returned to Joshua, and said []to him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour th[ere]; for they are but few.*

This is similar to what we have going on today. Russia's invading Ukraine. A huge army in Russia is coming down against this little Ukraine. It's almost the same thing here. The Israelites had an army of a half million troops against a town with one thousand to three thousand soldiers, something like that. The Israelites had a lot of confidence, but it wasn't particularly in the LORD. And the LORD wasn't going to help them. They said, Don't send the half-million-man army over there. Just a few thousand should be enough.

[4] *So there went up th[ere] of the people about three thousand men: and they **fled** before the men of Ai.*

They went up to fight Ai, turned their backs, and ran away. Why? They were afraid.

[5] *And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men:*

Thirty-six Israelites were killed.

for they chased them from before the gate

down in to their suburbs and killed them on the way down.

... wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

They had no courage. God gave them no courage. God will give people fear. He will put fear in their hearts, and that's what He did with the Israeites.

Joshua is clueless

What did Joshua do?

[6] And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the even[ing], he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

[7] And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

which wasn't the Promised Land. That was the land that Moses conquered.

[8] O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

[9] For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

This was kind of a low point in the life of Joshua as far as the record goes.
What did the LORD say about all of this?

The LORD rebukes Joshua

[10] And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

I Samuel 16

[7] ... man look[s] on the outward appearance, but the LORD look[s] on the heart.

God doesn't care about all this externalism:

Falling on his face.

Dust on his head.

That's of no value. He wants the heart to be right. We'll see that in just a few verses here.

[11] Israel hath sinned,

Actually it was one man, but his sin brought condemnation upon the whole nation.

and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them:

What was His covenant? That was what He gave Moses forty years earlier – the Ten Commandments, the Law.

for they have even taken of the accursed thing,

referring to the dedicated thing.

and have also stolen,

What's the eighth commandment? *Thou shalt not steal.*

and dissembled also,

They hid it there.

and they have put it even among their own stuff.

[12] *Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies,*

God put fear in their hearts.

but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

Notice the repetition of the word *accursed*. When we study the Bible we keep an eye out for repeated words – also called keywords. We will also be seeing the word *trouble* a little later.

Here's what God says to do. He said this in the beginning when they started out in the third chapter before they crossed the Jordan River.

[13] *Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing*

There's that word again.

in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

Achan found out, confesses

[14] *In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that*

the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.

[15] And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

That's the solution. They have to get down to this man. God will identify exactly who it is. And he will be destroyed.

How did they do this? We're told in the book of Exodus (28:30) when Aaron was the high priest, he was given something called the Urim and Thummim. It could have been a black and white ball. We're not told. But it was some means of choosing between true and false or perhaps drawing lots. The black and white ball would be sufficient to narrow things down to who this person was. It was the high priest typically that did this. It could have been Joshua and the high priest, but it probably was the high priest Eleazar.

[16] So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes;

And it turns out that they narrowed it down to Achan.

[19] And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

That word *hide* is interesting because Achan actually did hide something. How is it he could give glory to God by confessing what he did? Israel had a half million soldiers plus their families totaling about two million people. Achan was selected from among two million people. That's quite a feat. That's how it would give glory when he admitted that he did it. God picked the right person.

[20] And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

[21] When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

The LORD said that he stole these things. Achan first said that he coveted them and stole them. Stealing was the eighth commandment and coveting was the tenth commandment.

Joshua sentences Achan and executes the sentence

[22] So Joshua sent messengers ...

They went to the tent. They found the things all buried there just as he had said.

[24] And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

That word *Achor* we will see is a significant word also. There's going to be play on words here. And by the way, Joshua took these things including Achan's sons and daughters. They're all sort of condemned in this. One man's sin brought condemnation on Israel, but in more a specific sense brought it on his own family and even his animals and stuff. So what happened?

[25] And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us?

Achan's name means *troubler*. Joshua said, *Why hast thou troubled us?* There's a play on words here. And the word *Achor* means *trouble*. So we have all of this

the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

[26] And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger.

They did what the LORD prescribed, and the LORD is no longer angry with them. He accepted what they did there.

Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor,

which means trouble.

unto this day.

Application

How do we apply this to our own lives? The truth remains, as we saw from the Psalm at the start, despite the fact that God gives us eternal life by His grace, we're still responsible to Him for the things that we do. We can't just get away with sinning. We can't just cover it up. We can't pretend it away. God sees all that we do, say, and think.

We recently prepared a garden. Hopefully, it survived the frost. It seems to have. When we plant plant beans, we expect beans to come up. We planted tomatoes. We anticipate in a few months nice, juicy, ripe tomatoes down the road and not tulips.

The Bible says:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
(Galatians 6:7)

As the principle of sowing and reaping applies in gardening, so it applies in life. The Bible says:

Galatians 6

[7] Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

While God may forgive our sin and cover it with the blood of the cross, as with David, He did not free him from the **consequences** of bad decisions that he made. If we commit an offense against the civil law (we speed or whatever) we will face the consequences. If we offend another person, our own body, or God Himself there will be a price to pay. Even David, “a man after God’s on heart,” paid dearly throughout the remainder of his life after sincerely confessing his big sin with Bathsheba.

As God’s severe dealing with Achan has shown, He is **serious** about **punishing** sin – even of His own people. Yes, they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, but they still remain **accountable** to Him. May we live our lives in a way that honors and pleases the LORD so He can bless us.

Benediction

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

© Ron Harrod, 2022.

This document may be reproduced for noncommercial use only.